OSAIS
OBSERVATORY ON STATE AID IMPACT
INTERREG IVC
INNOVATION & ENVIRONMENT
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Newsletter

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EDITORIAL

Consuelo García Sánchez
International Programmes Manager

Dear readers,

It is a great pleasure to introduce you the fifth newsletter of OSAIS project.

In this new edition you will find information mainly about the so-called "staff exchanges". Within Interreg IVC programme language, staff exchange is one of the most relevant activities because this type of action allows each partner to "take with hands" the work practices of the partners and to know "in situ" how a good practice is implemented in a concrete territory and learn more about what other partners are doing in the project field.

At the same time, one of the main activities of the OSAIS project, the data gathering about the different state aid schemes implementing in each participating region is over and now it is the time to analyze the data and to present the first results during the Workshop on Survey Findings and Good Practices Selection to be held in Lisbon next January. Within the next newsletter we will deeply inform you about the main results presented in the event.

I am convinced that you will find interesting information in our newsletter and I do hope you will enjoying the reading.

Consuelo García
International Programmes Manager
FUERM

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European Commission User's Guide for State Aid Cases

The European Commission has updated in October 2011 the User's Guide for State Aid.

This multi-criteria search tool provides information on and access to **all state aid cases that have been the object of a Commission decision since 1st January 2000**. In addition, it provides information on **block exemption cases** registered by the Commission. Ongoing cases for which no decision has yet been taken are not included.

The search tool is updated **daily** and thus ensures that the public has timely access to the most recent state aid decisions.

You can find cases handled by all Commission Directorates-General responsible for state aid policy, namely:

- DG Competition (all state aid cases previously dealt with by the former DG Transport and Energy were moved to DG Competition in 2010)
- DG Agriculture and Rural Development
- DG Fisheries and Maritime Affairs

Limited information is available for a small number of decisions taken prior to 2000 under Old State aid Decisions.

How to find information on a case

You can find a case or a list of cases by selecting from a range of search criteria such as Member State, case title, primary objective, economic sector, date of decision, type of decision, and aid instrument. For example, you could select all French cases decided in the last six months in aid for research and development aid.

For further information, please visit:

http://ec.europa.eu/competition/elojade/isef/index.cfm?clear=1&policy_area_id=3

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Champagne-Ardenne and Lower Austria

6th October 2011

OSAIS partners have agreed on Staff Exchanges about regional and national state aid schemes for companies in order to exchange knowledge, to learn about the partners' funding scheme system and to examine Good Practices regarding a possible transfer. Every OSAIS partner will host at least one Staff Exchange. The duration of an Staff Exchange should be between 1 and 5 days.

In the original project schedule it was foreseen to start with the Staff Exchanges subsequently to the statistical analysis of the regional state aid schemes. Because of some delay in the statistical analysis due to higher effort for data gathering than expected the OSAIS partners Champagne-Ardenne and Lower Austria agreed on the first OSAIS Staff Exchange instead of waiting for the statistical analysis results. The Staff Exchange took place on 6th October 2011 in Chalons-en-Champagne, the capital of Champagne-Ardenne. The topic was the regional funding scheme system for R&D&Innovation in the host region of Champagne-Ardenne and the linkages to the national system. For Lower Austria the innovation policy of Champagne-Ardenne with related state aid schemes and repayable loans was of particular high interest.

The main findings of the Staff Exchange can be summarised as follows:

In case of Champagne-Ardenne the Department for Higher Education, Research and Innovation is responsible for R&D&I state aid schemes, this department is separated from the department for economic affairs. In Lower Austria the area of Technology and Innovation within the department for Economic Affairs, Tourism and Technology is responsible for R&D&I state aid schemes. While the government of Lower Austria provides R&D&I state aid schemes mainly in form of grants for the regional companies, the region of Champagne-Ardenne is often combining grants with loans with without interestan interest rate below the market price. In case of Lower Austria also non-incorporated firms can receive state aid schemes while state aid schemes in Champagne-Ardenne are only available for limited companies. In both regions state aids schemes for R&D&Innovation are not limited to particular sectors, but the beneficiary must not be in financial difficulties. Champagne-Ardenne is putting particular emphasis on social impact of the state aid schemes. Lower Austria is offering a higher net value of the funding in case of R&D cooperation of the beneficiary with external partners.

In Champagne-Ardenne the R&D&I project proposals are externally evaluated by either competitiveness cluster thematically related or other external experts while Lower Austria is doing this project evaluation within the own department.

The evaluation of the R&D&I policy is done by CARINNA, Champagne-Ardenne Research and Innovation Agency using a Regional Innovation Scoreboard approach comparing the performance of beneficiaries of R&D&I state aid schemes with non beneficiaries. Also Lower Austria is using a Balanced Scorecard approach which has different levels. Ex-post evaluation of single funded R&DI projects reveal information about the direct impact of the single project while a broad survey allows performance comparisons between funded and overall sector performance in Lower Austria.

In addition to the regional R&D&I schemes OSEO, a public-sector holding company which is reporting to both the ministry for the Economy, Finance and Industry, and the Ministry for Higher Education and Research in France, is providing further R&D&I state aid schemes and guarantees for companies in Champagne-Ardenne. Among other OSEO offers also repayable loans. The grant volume and the net grant equivalent are depending on a technology & risk assessment of the proposed project and on the reliability classification of the company. Approx. 60% of the given volume of the repayable grants is being reimbursed.

The exchange with the gained knowledge about the state aid scheme system in Champagne-Ardenne will be very valuable input for interpretation of the statistical analysis results of the respective state aid schemes.

Further Staff Exchanges of the other OSAIS partners will follow in the next months.

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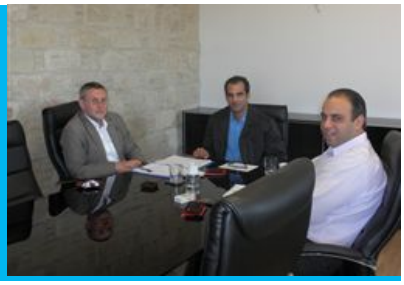
Bautzen and Larnaca

17-21 October 2011



Larnaca District Development Agency in cooperation with Bautzen Innovation Centre organized within staff exchange visits of the project, a meeting that took place in Cyprus from the 17th of October to the 21st of October.

Professor Jürgen Besold, representative of Bautzen Innovation Centre was invited and hosted in Cyprus during this period. Larnaca District Development Agency was represented in the meeting by its Director Mr. Michalis Zanos and project manager of OSAIS project Socrates Leptos.

The main topic for discussion in the meeting was the exchange of opinions between the 2 partner regions in relation to their selected state aid schemes and their objectives.

Firstly, Bautzen selected state aid schemes were discussed. The first scheme "Joint Agreement for the Improvement of Regional Economic Structures "Improvement of the regional economic structure" the main objective of which is the creation of qualified long-term jobs in Saxony as well as the contribution to the improvement of the income situation and to the strengthening of the regional economy. The second scheme "Research and development - project support" has main task to give an incentive for R&D projects for the development of new or novel products and processes to diminish the exceptionally high technical and financial risks. Finally, the third scheme of Bautzen innovation centre under the title "Medium-sized businesses support - fairs, product presentations and further activities" has as main objective the development of new markets by SMEs aiming to improve the degree of popularity and the acceptance of Saxony enterprises.

At the end of this point, the discussion was transferred to the selected state aid schemes of the Larnaca District Development Agency.

Firstly, scheme for the enhancement of SMEs' competitiveness of the manufacturing sector having a purpose of giving support, develop and promote existing or new enterprises in the manufacturing sector which are located or will be installed in areas of Cyprus controlled by the Republic of Cyprus and also aiming at helping small and medium enterprises to upgrade their equipment and the know how in order to become more competitive in the local and national market. The second scheme related in encouraging the improvement and development of processing and trading of agriculture products aiming in developing and promoting businesses in the manufacturing sector that are dealing with processing of agricultural products as well as supporting investments on new machinery and equipment. Finally, the development of manufacturing sector in rural areas is the last selected scheme, the main objective of which is the support, growth and promotion of manufacturing sector via financing aids for the extension and modernization of existing or even for the creation of new viable small and medium enterprises.

As additional point of discussion in the meeting was the possibility of creation of an incubator of enterprises in the District of Larnaca. Based on the experience of Professor Jürgen Besold (Director of incubator in Saxony) there was an analysis of the idea, discussion, exchange of opinions and ways that such incubators can be built in a strong base. Within this, a meeting with the Director of the Larnaca Chamber of Commerce and industry Mr. Giorgos Psaras was organized, where the whole idea was presented and several points likes possible ways of financing, participation bodies, objectives of incubator and many others were discussed and analyzed based on action plan. The reaction of Mr Psaras was really positive and as they all said they will try to do their best for this idea to move forward. This issue is going to be discussed again in the near future.

As a general conclusion it has to be mentioned that the opinion of Professor Jürgen Besold about the schemes that Larnaca District development Agency has selected was really positive. More specifically he commented to the point that the responsible organization is the same for all three schemes (Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism) and also that all three schemes involve the manufacturing sector which as he said should be an important tool for the economy of Cyprus. In relation to the Bautzen schemes, the Director of the Larnaca District Development Agency (Mr. Michalis Zanos) was really impressed and as he said it is very important that within those schemes seems that Bautzen is trying at the same time to promote products and improve the popularity of enterprises in the area of Saxony and at the same time looking at the future by giving incentive to new projects and trying to promote the creation of new long-term jobs in the area.

Staff Exchange Seasons

Lisbon, Tagus Valley and Veneto Region

5-7 December 2012

The staff exchanges represent a real good chance to strengthen the relationship among the partners and the skills in the management of state aids. The second staff exchange took place in Lisbon from the 5th to the 7th of December between Lisbon and Tagus Valley Region and Veneto Region.

The meetings scheduled among the Technical Secretary of the Lisbon Regional Operational Programme (ROP) and the representative of the Veneto Region Brussels Department, showed in which way state aids are granted through the Lisbon ROP and how they comply with the state aid European regulations.

The Technical Secretary actually explained the functioning of the Incentives' System (IS) network, in which the Lisbon ROP participates, the link with the Operational Programme for Competitiveness Factors (the organism that has a key role in the setting up of the IS and is also in charge for its national information system) and IFDR (Payment Authority who is in contact with the European Commission and is also in charge for the Minimis control).

Two proposals submitted under calls launched in the framework of Axe I of the Lisbon ROP (IS for Innovation and for the Internationalisation of SME) have been examined in order to have a clear idea on how all the procedure in Lisbon Region works.
A meeting with the mentioned IFDR was also organized and they explained how they set up a monitoring system of the Minimis (Registo Central de Auxílios de Minimis) that allows them to know the exact amount that an enterprise received under the Minimis framework and consequently to check whether the maximum amount has been reached.

Dear all, if learning by each other experience is, as usual, a key factor we can say that Lisbon and Tagus Valley Region and Veneto Region Staff exchange have reached this goal!

Upcoming Events

Workshop on Survey findings in Lisbon

24-25 January 2012

On 24th and 25th January 2012 the Workshop on Survey Findings and Good Practices selection will be held in Lisbon (Portugal).

After the period of data gathering implemented by the whole partnership, with all the information available about the state aids schemes in all participating regions, the Leader of Component 3 of OSAIS project, Lower Austria region will present during this workshop the Top 5 Ranking impact indicator list and the selection of good practice to the whole partnership. With this workshop, the research phase of OSAIS project will be finished.

Upcoming Events

First Study Visit in Opolskie

21- 23 March 2012

On 21st – 23rd March 2012 the first OSAIS study visit will be implemented in Opolskie, Poland.

This study visit will be the opportunity for the whole partnership to deepen in the field of good practices proposed by Opolskie and to have meeting with different Polish stakeholders involved in the State Aids Regional System.